

Program teaches students to PARTY

Long-term participation in outdoor activities and environmental issues are both parts of the program.

By LINDA YANG
register correspondent

Polk County Conservation wants to throw a party. But this isn't the typical streamers-and-balloons affair, with a punch bowl perched in a corner. In fact, don't even think about holding up indoors.

PARTY — Playful, Active Recreation Targeted for You — is all about exploring the outdoors. It is

aimed at middle and high school students who are served by after-school programs in the Des Moines area.

"The whole goal of this grant is to teach outdoor skills and instill environmental knowledge and get kids active," said Lori Foresman-Kirpes, project manager and naturalist at Polk County Conservation.

The program, slated to start in October, will pair up with after-school programs run by the Chrysalis Foundation, the Male Responsibility Group, Show 'Em Whatcha Got and SUCCESS. Polk County Conservation naturalists will visit these programs to teach

outdoor skills and highlight environmental issues.

Some of the instruction — such as basic canoeing and orienteering skills — will take place indoors. The teens can then practice what they've learned in hands-on experiences outdoors, such as taking a canoe trip on a local river.

The program is financed by a \$30,000 grant from the Resource Enhancement and Protection program of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The after-school organizations are excited about their partnership with PARTY.

"When Polk County Conservation came to us with the PARTY grant, we thought it was a really good collaboration," said Nancy Wells, SLICECESS program specialist.

Lori Rinehart, program coordinator at the Chrysalis Foundation, said PARTY satisfies her organization's goals of enriching

the lives of girls and women.

"One of the objectives of the Chrysalis Foundation is to expose our young women to things they've never tried or never thought they'd do," she said. "The program really wants to broaden the girls' horizons."

Wells said she hopes PARTY raises young people's awareness of and compassion toward the environment.

"What we hope is they get a connection to the environment," she said. "You save what you value."

Long-term participation in outdoor activities and making environmentally sound decisions are also key objectives of PARTY.

Patrice Petersen-Keys, project coordinator from Polk County Conservation, hopes the program compels students to continue enjoying outdoor recreation six months down the road and invite friends and family to get active with them.

"The big thing is, we want to see behavioral changes," she said.

BREAKING NEW GROUND



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Ankeny Mayor Merle Johnson starts the construction process during the ground-breaking ceremony for the new building at Parkview School in Ankeny last Thursday.

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